

Blackthorn Parish Council

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2024 at 7pm in Blackthorn Village Hall.

Councillors Present: Mrs J. Lamont (JL) Chairman, Cllrs. Mr R. Rue (RR) Vice-Chairman, Mr C. Hegarty-Swain (CHS), Mr R. Burden (RB), R. Lamont and Mrs A. Stevenson (AS).

In Attendance: T. Charlesworth Clerk/RFO
27 members of the public.

24.20 Apologies:

RESOLVED: To accept apologies from:

- Cllr. RR who left the meeting following the public participation; for personal reasons.
- County Cllr. I. Corkin.

24.21 Declarations of Interest: None declared.

24.22 Public Participation:

- a. **Flooding: As directed by the Chairman the meeting time was brought forward to 7pm to allow an extension to the public participation in order to discuss flooding concerns in the village:** The Chair addressed the meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for attending; photos and drone footage were displayed on screen.. A statement, drawn up by the Chairman Cllr. J. Lamont and Vice Chairman Cllr. R. Rue, the Chairman Cllr. J. Lamont took the opportunity to express the parish council's thanks to Cllr. R. Rue for his time and efforts with regards to the flooding issues, was read out and questions addressed. Key points:-
 - i. Network Rail needs to ensure it renews its Planning License (runs out on 7 May 2024). The Chairman will follow this up with Victoria Prentis MP. It was noted that Network Rail were given planning permission to carry out the work, which ignored recommendations from the parish council, and have now proven to have exacerbated the flooding issues in Blackthorn, evidenced by the photos and drone footage taken in January.
 - ii. Network Rail has now given an undertaking to reinstate the high ground by the summer following investigative works that need to be carried out sooner rather than later.
 - iii. The County Engineer has advised that water off of the A41 will be diverted into the TOE ditch away from Blackthorn.
 - iv. Whilst the Parish Council pays for Blackthorn Brook to be cleared each year, residents are responsible for keeping their ditches clear; O.C.C. have measures to pressure residents that do not. There are links on the parish council website to the O.C.C. flood kit, which has advice if you are at risk of flooding.
 - v. There are no emergency, temporary, solutions as investigative works have to be carried out, to ensure there is no damage to subsoils, before any works.
 - vi. Providing the River Ray water levels remain below two metres at Arncott, Blackthorn should not experience any further flooding this Spring. Water levels can be viewed at <https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/station/7068>.
 - vii. Pumping Station: There is a meeting arranged with Thames Water on 15 March 2024, the parish council hope to have an update to report at the Annual Meeting in May.
 - viii. Flood Forum: Representatives from Blackthorn and surrounding parish councils attend the flood forums, organised by County Cllr. C. Miller a couple of times a year, to discuss flooding issues.
 - ix. A member of the public thanked the parish council for its tenacity.

The Chairman Cllr. J. Lamont thanked everyone for attending; members of the public left by 8pm and the meeting continued...

24.23 Minutes: To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 1 February 2024 at 7.30pm previously circulated and taken as read.

RESOLVED: Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 1 February 2024 at 7.30pm were approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. J. Lamont.

24.24 Reports:

- a. **Chairman's Report:** None.
- b. **Clerk's Report:** None.

24.25 Vacancy/Co-option: Mr E. Burborough put himself forward for consideration.

RESOLVED:

- To accept and approve the co-option of Mr E. Burborough.

24.26 District or County Councillors: No reports received.

24.27 Governance:

a. **Civility & Respect:**

i. **Dignity at Work Policy:**

RESOLVED:

- ii. That there was no need for a separate policy to be drawn up as the parish council's Code of Conduct and its Standing Orders covers procedures.
- iii. **To put in place a training programme for councillors and staff:** Parish Council members to be updated on Code of Conduct training.
- b. **Policy:**
 - i. **Training:** See 24.27-a-iii.
- c. **Standing Orders:**
RESOLVED:
 - That the Parish Council accepts the contents of Para.18 with no amendments.
- d. **Risk Assessment:**
RESOLVED:
 - To accept and approve the matrix added to the risk assessment.
- e. **Data Protection Regulations:**
 - i. **Generic Emails:** All councillors to try and complete setup by the next meeting.
- f. **Annual Review of Documents:** Documents to be reviewed by 31 March; C/fwd.
 - i. **The Characteristics of Effectiveness of Internal Audit:**
 - ii. **Internal Audit Review of Effectiveness of Internal Auditor:**
RESOLVED:
 - To approve the combined version of the document as recommended by the Internal Auditor, to be updated with the new Internal Auditor details going forward for 2023/24.
- iii. **Asset Register:**
RESOLVED:
 - To approve the asset register with no additions.
- iv. **Financial Regulations:**
RESOLVED:
 - To approve the current Financial Regulations with no amendments.
- g. **Internal Auditor:**
 - i. **To consider and approve the Terms and Conditions of a new Internal Auditor:** The Parish Council considered three letters of Engagement as invited from the list of Internal Auditors on the Internal Audit Forum..
 - ii. **To approve the appointment of a new Internal Auditor.**
RESOLVED:
 - To accept and approve the Letter of Engagement from Lisa Wilkinson as Independent Internal Auditor for the End of Year Audit 2023/24.

24.28 Project Reports:

- a. **Drainage/Flooding:**
 - i. **River Bank Repairs/Network Rail:** See 24.22-a-i-ix.
 - **Meeting with Thames Water** - Meeting provisionally booked for 1pm on the 15th of March to discuss issues surrounding the pumping station.
 - ii. **Blackthorn Brook:** Update on last 15m clearance: No update.
- b. **Village Plan: Review of proposals:**
 - i. **White Traffic Calming Gates:** No update.
 - ii. **Proposed new gate on Station Road at the Junction of Weir Lane:** To consider any information relating to an application for permission of proposed new gate: C/fwd.
 - iii. **20mph Application:** O.C.C. – Blackthorn 20mph Limits: Draft letter to O.C.C. approved. Noted that the 20mph limit has gone live.
- c. **O.C.C. - RE: Changes to Schedule 1 of S101 grass cutting agreement:** To consider and approve changes:
RESOLVED:
 - That the Parish Council accepts and approves the changes to Schedule 1 of S101 of the grass cutting agreement between the Parish Council and O.C.C.

24.29 Finance:

- a. **Payments prior to the Meeting:** To record and approve any invoices paid prior the meeting as listed on the payment schedule:
 - i. **Coversure Insurance** - FW: Working From Home Insurance Renewal – Renewal 10 January 2024 - £134.37 – Cheque No: 101490- Cheque not received by Coversure up to 23.2.2024: Consider reissuing new cheque: Coversure Insurance have confirmed receipt of payment.
 - ii. **Salary February 2024** - £299.00 – Payment issued for £283.40 less Income Tax based on P6 Advice to change tax code (see 24.29-d-i) – Cheque No: 101493.
- b. **Receipts:** To record and approve any receipts received as listed:
 - i. **Merton Parish Council** – Contribution towards Home Working Insurance - £67.18.
- c. **Payments:**
 - i. **Salary(s):**
 - Exp Feb 2024 - Expenses £14.78 – Mileage £0.00 – Home Working Allowance £26.00 – Total £40.78 - Cheque No: 101496.
 - Exp March 2024 - Expenses £0.00 – Mileage £4.80 – Home Working Allowance £26.00 – Total £30.80 – Cheque No: 101496.

- HMRC – HM Revenue & Customs – Notice of Penalty Assessment – Quarter ended 5 January 2024 – Penalty for failure to file PAYE returns on time - £100.00 – Cheque No: 101494.
 - ii. **Membership Renewal:**
 - OALC Membership Invoice 2024 – Inv. No: B00009/2024/1 - £168.00 – Cheque No: 101495.
 - iii. C.D.C. - Dog Bins – Change to invoicing to be noted: from April 2024 C.D.C will change its invoicing to two separate equal payment. They will not stipulate the amount of empties carried out each week, instead they will simply assure you that they will keep the dog bins emptied all year round to the required standard. i.e. to ensure they do not overflow.
 - d. **Payroll:** To record submission to HMRC: Up to date.
 - i. **HMRC – P6(T)** – Notice to Employer of Employee's Tax Code (or amended code) and previous pay and tax: Tax code amended as advised.
 - e. **Bank Reconciliation:** Presented prior to the meeting.
 - i. To accept the Bank Reconciliation up to 7.3.2024 (Barclays issue date 19.1.2024):

Balance B/fwd	£23,403.43
Add Total Receipts	£ 42.92
Less Total Payments	£ 1,131.61
Balance C/fwd	£23,314.74
 - f. **Budget Comparison:** To accept the budget comparison up to the 7 March 2024:
 - Allotment rent reminders to be hand posted along with updated Allotment Agreements.
 - g. **Financial Controls:** Quarterly check to be completed and signed off by Internal Control and RFO: C/fwd.
 - h. **VAT Spreadsheet:** Presented prior to the meeting; was accepted, showing an outstanding amount of £28.00; Claim submitted for £405.62 up to the end of December 2023.
 - i. **Quotes:**
 - i. **Traffic Calming Gates:** Quote to be obtained for the spraying of wooden gates: C/fwd.
 - j. **Grants/Funding:** To consider any relevant applications for funding: None.
- 24.30 Planning:**
- a. **Planning: Applications:** To consider all recent applications received from Cherwell District Council detailed below and any other planning applications submitted and published on the CDC planning portal between the agenda being published and the meeting: None noted.
 - b. **Decision Notices:** None noted
 - c. **Appeal Notices:** None noted.
 - d. **Withdrawal Notices:** None noted.
 - e. **Planning Matters:**
 - i. **Network Rail:** No update. Cllr. RB to attend meeting.
 - ii. **C.D.C. - Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment Consultation** - The Consultation Hub will be open for comments until 6th March 2024: Closed.
 - iii. **O.C.C. - Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan** - Consultation open for feedback – closes 10 March: Noted.
- 24.31 Clerk's Contract:** Draft presented to Clerk for review.
- a. **To consider and approve Clerk's updated contract based on the NALC Model 2011:** C/fwd.
 - b. **Upon acceptance and approval to be signed:** C/fwd.
- 24.32 Village Maintenance Tasks:** Review of proposed job role: C/fwd.
- 24.33 Community Emergency Plan Survey – 2024 - O.C.C. - FOR ACTION: - Deadline for return is April 1st 2024:**
- a. **Emergency Plan:** Review c/fwd.
- 24.34 OALC - Free Portrait of His Majesty The King for Town, Parish and Community Councils –** applications from all eligible Public Authorities will remain open until the closing date for Town, Parish and Community councils and MoD-sponsored cadet forces on 28th March 2024:
- RESOLVED:**
- To approve application.
- 24.35 Attendance at Meetings:** No attendance recorded:-
- 24.36 Correspondence/Emails: (See Appendix 4): (B.P.C. 313):** Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda: None noted.
- a. **BPC313(86): 31.1.2024 - SLCC - News Bulletin** - 31 January 2024 – Changes to website accessibility compliance to WCAG 2.2AA and the adoption of .gov.uk Domains for Improved Authenticity of Message & Security: Clerk to contract Navitas Design regarding the new rules.
 - b. **BPC314(50): 27.2.2024 - C.D.C. - Confirmation of Council Tax and Precepts Approval for 2024/25:** Noted.
- 24.37 Village Matters:**
- a. **Facebook: Matters for Parish Council consideration raised through the village Facebook page:** The Parish Council review matters on the Facebook page and advise authors to raise matters for the agenda through the parish council clerk.
 - i. None.

- b. **Publication:** To consider approve matters for publication through the Parish Council website or village Facebook page: It was noted by a parishioner that the Parish Council website was not being visited by many people; agenda to publish the website address rather than a link to the website; the Community section of the website to be used to advertise matters like the flooding issues on the agenda.

24.38 Matters for Further Information or Discussion at the Next Meeting:

- a. **Matters for Further Information:**
 - Noted that the Rat Factory has been sold to developers who intend to consult with parishioners before submitting a planning application.
- b. **Matters for Discussion at the next meeting:**
 - Code of Conduct Training.

24.39 Date of Next Parish Council Meeting:

- a. 4 April 2024 at 7:30pm in Blackthorn Village Hall.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:00pm.
Draft Minutes subject to Confirmation

Minutes approved 4 April 2024 – M3/2024-24.44
Signed by the Chairman: J. Lamont